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President's Welcome at Commencement

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President's Welcome

May 5, 2013

Good afternoon and Congratulations to the Class of 2013!

I am pleased to welcome you on behalf of the faculty and staff of Illinois Wesleyan to this Commencement in our 163rd year.

This is truly a day to remember:

- We can stop looking at the Weather Channel. The sun is peeking out from time to time from behind the clouds.
- For the students, the Commencement Plaza is done just in time for your graduation.
- And, most importantly, you will soon be alumni of Illinois Wesleyan



President Richard F. Wilson

I cannot tell you how excited we are to be hosting this event on the new Glenn and Rozanne P. Kemp Commencement Plaza. Glenn and Rozanne received their diplomas from IWU in 1922 and 1927. The admiration of the Kemp family for Glenn and Rozanne made this plaza possible, a commitment in my mind that symbolizes the connection among Titans across generations.

And the Class of 2013 will forever claim the distinction of being the first graduates to walk across this plaza and we're delighted about that.

As President of this University, I frequently have the opportunity to listen to wonderful performances by faculty and students from our School of Music. Today, that talent is on display for all of us. I would like to thank Shelby Jones for leading us in singing "America the Beautiful." I especially want to thank Professor Steven Eggleston and members of the Illinois Wesleyan Wind Ensemble for sharing their talents with us this afternoon. Thank you very much.

Four years ago, the Class of 2013 arrived in Bloomington with a heightened sense of exhilaration, anticipation, and anxiety. I suspect that those of you who joined this class as transfer students will recall those same emotions during your first few weeks in college. The irony is that for most of you today, this is another transition in life, one again fueled by a mixture of excitement, anticipation, and anxiety.

While this day and this ceremony properly focus on you as graduates, we must not lose sight of the fact that you did not make this journey alone. Therefore, it's only appropriate to take a moment to thank those who helped you along the way.

- I would ask the Class of 2013 to please stand and face the faculty and staff who are seated immediately behind you, and give this group a round of applause.
- While you are standing, please turn in the direction of your parents and friends who are here today and extend a round of applause to them as well.

This Commencement ceremony honors you for what you have accomplished at one of the finest liberal arts colleges in the country. All of us are pleased to have shared this journey with you.

We also gather to celebrate the potential you represent and the contributions you will make in the future. I sincerely hope that you will remain loyal to Illinois Wesleyan as you join the more than 20,000 alumni who can be found doing great things across our nation and around the world.

I do have one request. At the Senior Class Dinner, I played a few songs from my iTunes playlist that were popular during your time at IWU. Drawing from the lyrics of one of those songs, I hope you will do more than "Call Me Maybe."

Four years ago, the Class of 2008 presented my wife and me with a concrete pineapple to replace the small wooden one that had adorned the top of the entrance to the President's House. We were pleased to receive this gift and decided to start a new tradition. As you may know, the pineapple is often used to symbolize the spirit of friendship and gracious hospitality.

After you receive your diploma and are leaving the stage, give the Titan pineapple a friendly tap as a way of acknowledging the friendships that you have formed on this campus and, in addition, the University's pledge that you are always welcome here. This is one of Wesleyan's most enduring gifts.

It is now my honor to present the Chair of the Board of Trustees, George Vinyard, Class of 1971.